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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR CA/EX, CA/FPP, CA/VO, AND EUR/SCE (MIKE FOOKS); DEPT ALSO
PASS TO KCC; POSTS FOR FRAUD PREVENTION MANAGERS; VIENNA FOR DHS
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [CPAS](#) [ASEC](#) [BK](#)

SUBJECT: Bosnia consular outreach program yields substantial drop in
Summer Work and Travel refusal rate and rise in total participants.

¶1. [Summary] In past years, Sarajevo's refusal rate for J1 Summer
Work and Travel (SWT) applicants was often over 50 percent.
Recognizing that our refusal rate was directly related to a Post
policy of only issuing to students of accredited universities, the
Consular section launched an outreach program targeting, schools,
and recruiters in an attempt of minimize the negative public
relations impact of a high student refusal rate. Now that the
summer student visa season is coming to a close, we are able to look
back at our program to validate whether our outreach efforts were
successful. Sarajevo now can report a 92% drop in SWT refusals in
¶2009. In addition, by focusing on recruitment of better candidates,
post was able to nearly triple the number of SWT participants from
last year. [End Summary]

¶2. Previously, no federal level BiH government agency was charged
with accreditation, therefore many students going to newer private
universities did not meet the basic requirements for SWT of
attending an accredited university. Yet, they were applying for SWT
J1 visas anyway. In 2008, the Consular section refused 74 percent
of SWT applicants. For a student exchange program that promotes
experiencing life in the United States, Post felt that the high
number of refusals was negating any positives which might be gained
by those traveling to the US on the program. Post embarked upon an
outreach program to clarify with the feeder institutions what
qualifications were necessary to partake in the program.

¶3. This past winter we educated our applicant pool to the
requirements needed to participate in the program and to encourage
students from qualifying universities to apply. Between November
2008 and May 2009, the Consular section conducted numerous meetings
with student groups, university administrators, and private travel
agencies and other recruiters. Post canvassed the entire country,
from Bihac in the extreme northwest, to Banja Luka, Tuzla, and
Sarajevo. Post also shared information with our Embassy in
neighboring Serbia for agencies that often recruit within BiH.

¶4. Our efforts resulted in a 2009 refusal rate of only 8 percent of
SWT applicants. More significantly, the total number of students
participating in the program nearly tripled from the previous year.
The number of issuances increased despite a 25 percent drop in
overall SWT applicants. The dramatic increase in issuances is
especially good news, as Post believes that the SWT program has the
potential to be a very positive influence on Bosnian youth. Post
hopes that with renewed outreach efforts in the coming year, that we
can continue this upward trend. Additionally, the BiH government has
established an agency to address the accreditation issue. A future
cable will discuss new developments that may precipitate a new SWT
policy in BiH and an expansion of overall eligible participants.

